

DISCOVERING BINGHAM

Quarterly NEWSLETTER of the **Bingham Heritage Trails Association**
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BHTA: Increasing public awareness of our heritage in Architecture, Folk & Natural History, Archaeology & Geology

NEW BHTA WEB SITE

Since our first project in 2001, our web site, which is managed for us by a local company called Ambrow, has been the main means of showing the public the results of our research. Our first major upgrade was in 2004, when we added a great deal of new material to the site. The next was in May this year on completion of the *History of Settlement* project. Not only have we more than doubled the size of the site, we have redesigned it to make it easier to use. If you have not looked at it yet, then log on to www.binghamheritage.org.uk to see what we have done.

We know that the site is used by school children when they are doing history projects and by people doing family history studies, but our hope was that the new site would attract users with other interests. This seems to have happened. For this year up to September there was an average of 100 visits a day to the site. Then in October the number suddenly increased to 130 and by mid November it was running at 148 a day, the highest we have ever recorded.

Among the many improvements, we now have a drop-down menu at the left

hand side of the home page (as shown below) that stays with you wherever you are in the site enabling you to move rapidly from page to page. However, the main improvement is that we now have a search facility to make navigation really easy.

The big new section is History of Settlement in which we have put all the detail about the project, but we have also rewritten the History of Bingham.

If you click on the History of Settlement the titles of the four subsections will drop down. Pick any one of these and you will get into the detail. We have put pretty well everything we discovered in the project onto the site including pictures of the different types of pottery, clay pipes, flints and so on and maps showing where we found them. In the Crow Close study we show the old air

photographs as well as the detailed maps we made. Under Study of Old Maps you can see in detail where all the houses, farms and cottages were in 1586, 1776 and 1841. The work we have done on the open field system, as recorded in the 1586 Manorial survey, gives a unique picture of Elizabethan Bingham. Type "Agnes Musson" into the search panel on the home page and you will get a list of choices. Go to number 5 and you will find a map showing all the strips she had. There is one in each furlong. Historians who have seen this map have been very impressed. There are few examples anywhere that show quite as well as this, what it was like to be a farmer in the 16th century.

The key is this: log onto the web site and then go where you want. There will be something of interest almost everywhere.

BHTA
BINGHAM HERITAGE TRAILS ASSOCIATION

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HISTORY OF SETTLEMENT

HISTORY OF SETTLEMENT OF BINGHAM PARISH

DETAILS OF THE PROJECT

In November 2004 Bingham Heritage Trails Association (BHTA) received a grant from the Local History of Settlement in Bingham Parish. It was completed in December 2008.

CATCHING UP ON THE NEWS

2500 leaflets have been distributed to set off the **Garden Finds Project**, asking residents to save any pottery, glass, bone, clay pipes etc they may find whilst digging and weeding their garden. It is the first stage of finding out what lies in the parts of Bingham we could not field walk. Some members are acting as street wardens to receive the collected material which we plan to collect in early summer, but we are happy to receive contributions at any time.

A number of people have asked the library why they have not received a leaflet. This is generally because we are pretty sure the housing development where they live had all its topsoil removed and (if at all) had "foreign" soil brought in - which of course would tell us nothing about Bingham!

It is well known that we rescued a **Roman Well** from the A46 development with the intention of reconstructing it as a feature for the town. We had over 20 potential sites to evaluate in discussion with the

town council and, importantly, the planning department of Rushcliffe BC. Most were discounted either on heritage grounds (you can't import a Roman structure into the Victorian heritage of the Market Place) or because the location was too far out of Bingham or had safety issues. The site with the highest footfall and no conservation issues, Eaton Place, was regrettably rejected as being too vulnerable. The cemetery entrance area has proved to be acceptable (subject to final planning approval) to all concerned. RBC has suggested the new play area at Swallow Drive could be considered, but we think this is too far out of town.

The cemetery was constructed on Victorian design principles and as such is actually an arboretum - there are over 40 types of tree. The plan now is to label and sign it as an arboretum. We shall also produce a new town walk leaflet which will lead people from the Market Place, through the old town, into the arboretum, past the Well (if that is where it ends up) and back to the Buttercross. BHTA and the Town Council will take

the plans forward as a joint project which hopefully will provide a popular attraction for Bingham.

The **Buttercross** is 150 years old next year. In another joint project with the town council we are planning a celebration in the summer. The Buttercross will be decorated with flowers for the Summer Fair, much as it used to be each year in remembrance of John Hassall, the Earl of Chesterfield's popular land agent. During the following Thursday Market BHTA will have an information display in the Buttercross and on the following Saturday there will be a Victorian Market with music of the period, so start looking out your Victorian gear now and make a note in your 2011 BHTA Calendar, available now from Geoff Ashton or the Newsagent in Eaton Place, price £3.50.

BINGHAM BOYS AND THE BOER WAR

In our March 2009 issue of the newsletter, we printed a letter written by a young soldier Jack Gill serving in the Boer war, to his parents in Bingham and the words of a song written by C. Doncaster urging young men of Bingham to join in the fight against the Boers and mentioning the young men of Bingham, who were already fighting in South Africa. We wondered what became of the young men, did they return? As we reported in the last issue, we know now that Jack Gill died of fever and is buried in South Africa. We have now heard from Mrs Caroline Ward, who lives in Bingham, who was able to give us information of another of the young men, William



This photomontage gives an impression of how the reconstructed Roman well might look in the cemetery

Spurr. William was the son of Henry and Ellen Spurr, one of ten children. He was born in Bottesford in 1866, and moved to Bingham with his family. The 1891 census shows he was a farmer's day boy. He joined the Sherwood Foresters and then the First Battalion Derbyshire Regiment. William did survive the war and eventually returned to Bingham and lived in Fairfield Street. He died in 1925 and is buried in the Council cemetery in Bingham. It is so good to receive information like this. It fills in gaps in our knowledge of Bingham. Perhaps there are more people out there who can give us more information on the other young men; Freddy Shepherd - 1st Durham Light Infantry, Tommy Gash - 5th Dragoon Guards, Private Williams - 3rd Grenadier Guards and Sergeant Wilson.

BINGHAM IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

While reviewing what we have discovered so far about Bingham's history, we find that the period during the Second World War leaves

some gaps in our knowledge. Consequently this area is forming part of a study to fill a hole, so to speak. Our web site already includes a section 'Wartime Bingham' that was compiled by Eric Sharpe in 2004. This will form the foundation for the new work which will also include material generously provided by David and Margaret Sibley who have also researched the period. There are many other people still around who remember this time, and, if you are one please get in touch, either via our website or using the contacts listed on page 4, to let us know your memories.

The village, as it was then, was very active during the conflict with search lights and a tented camp on Crow Close, an Italian prisoner of war camp on the A46 and numerous storage facilities around the village. With the proximity of RAF Stations at Newton and Langar, together with excellent road and rail communication facilities it is no wonder that Bingham became an important place in the local scheme of

things. The Methodist hall served as a Navy Army Air Force Institute (NAAFI) in the period providing food and succour to our serving men.

Although the only known record of a bomb dropping was on adjacent fields we were none the less prepared. There were Firemen, Home Guard (see below) and Air Raid wardens trained and ready, a siren on the Council House and numerous air raid shelters around the village. We have received information of aircraft crashes around Bingham, one in particular, a Wellington Bomber on "Mill Hill Farm". We do not know the location of this farm. Can you help?

All in all wartime Bingham was a hive of activity with many projects to support our troops such as food parcels from the WI or collecting scrap metal in the 'Build a Spitfire' appeal. Add to this the numerous contributions by the individual citizens - Bingham certainly played its part.



Firemen L to R - Standing: *Frank Shepperson, Eric Cooper.* Sitting: *Reg Mabbott, Arthur Morris, Jack Griffin.*



Home Guard - We have five names: *Tommy McKay, Harry Browne, Fred Morley, Ted Little, Tim Cowling & Mr. Lane.* Can anyone identify them or name the remaining five?



2011 SERIES OF OPEN LECTURES

The first of an occasional series of BHTA open lectures started in the 2002/2003 winter season since when it has become a regular feature of our annual activities. From the start each event has attracted audiences of 60 or more to hear talks on a variety of topics linked to Bingham's history given by BHTA members or visiting speakers. For the 07/08 season we contented ourselves with a joint Bingham Community Art and BHTA production of 'Bingham Christmas 1865' so that the 6th series was held between January and May 2009. This year saw another break with lectures as we marked the end of the Settlement project with the exhibition in the library from March to August and the launch in May of our book 'Bingham, Back in Time'.

For 2011 we are planning the 7th series of three free, open lectures with a linking theme of 'Bingham's People and Places' which are detailed in the panel below. All will be held in the Methodist Church Hall starting at 8.00 p.m. presented by a team of BHTA members. Please make a note of the dates in your diary.

60 + SIT DOWN AT OUR HOT POT SUPPER

The supper is our main annual fundraising event and this year eight hosts provided the starter and main course for the guests on their table. The £10 tickets included wine and desserts, many of which were donated by members. After the meal, Jack Wilson gave us his 'poetic' resumé of the year and Joyce Allen, Joan Ashton and Sally Sanderson gave readings from their research in the newspaper archives. Below is just one of the fascinating extracts dating from November 1813.

AERIAL ASCENSION OF MR SADLER

Public expectation, we believe, never ran so high, and public gratification was never more complete, than on Monday last when Mr. Sadler ascended with his balloon,

from the Canal Company's Wharf in Nottingham.

The state of the weather was particularly propitious and the multitude of people collected together on the occasion from all parts exceeded all calculation. The splendour of the scene was considerably heightened by the clear state of the atmosphere, not a cloud intervened; and a gentle breeze blowing from the West, he floated most magnificently through the air at a moderate altitude. The wind carried the aeronaut across the Trent and the vale of Belvoir, and he was distinctly seen with the naked eye from St. Mary's tower in Nottingham for 45 minutes. At Bingham, Cotgrave and in all the villages near the Vale, Mr. Sadler was seen distinctly waving his flag. After a very pleasant voyage of 59 minutes Mr. Sadler descended in a field near Pickworth, Rutlandshire, distant from here 32 miles.

Mr. Sadler breakfasted the next morning in Bingham.

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2011 LECTURES

**On the theme:
Bingham's People and Places**

**Thursday 27th January
1841 Early Victorian Times**

**Thursday 10th March
1776 Georgian Times**

**Thursday 12th May
1586 Elizabethan Times**

Presented by a team of BHTA speakers including: Peter & Joyce Allen, Geoff Ashton, and Adrian Henstock.